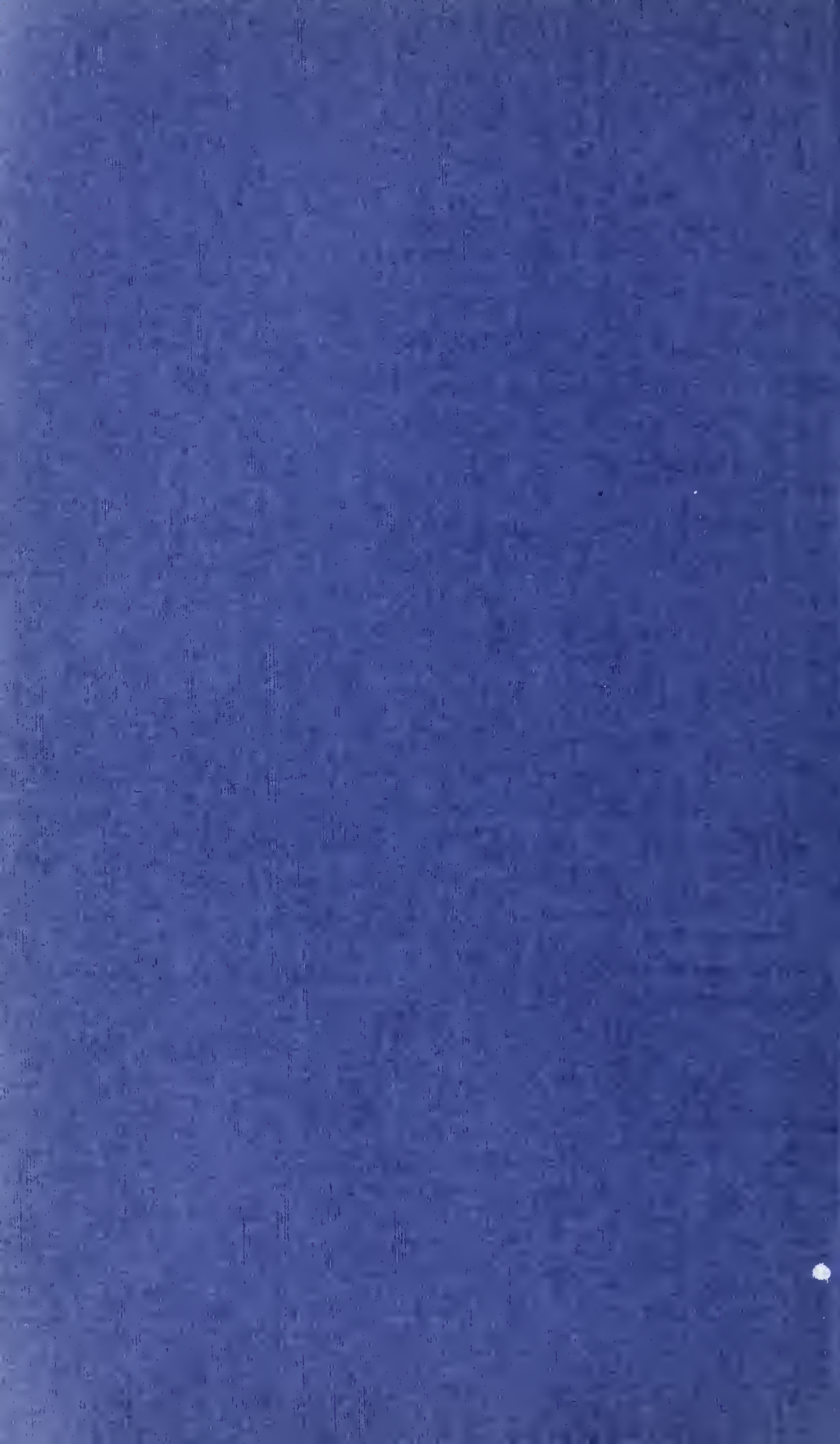


Address of
Benjamin Matthias Read
President Pennsylvania Federation
of Historical Societies





ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT.

The President, Mr. Nead, addressed the meeting as follows :

FELLOW WORKERS OF THE FEDERATION : I am deeply sensible of the honor and privilege which you have accorded to me in choosing me to be president of this Federation, and in permitting me to address you to-day. I am also mindful of the responsibilities which the office bears with it.

The question where the duty of absolute acquiescence ends and the duty of stricture or criticism begins is a delicate one, and in no case easy to solve. Absolute acquiescence in the existing condition of affairs is sometimes weakness, or worse, cowardice. On the other hand stricture, which is but the vain utterance of the chronic caviler, is a most disagreeable nuisance, so at the outstart of this address your president desires to assure his friends of the Federation that no such disagreeable nuisance shall be in any way involved in what he may say. He desires to make no stricture upon or adverse criticism of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies in its aims, its purposes, or in its operations. It is his purpose simply to present in their proper bearings a few thoughts evolved from a sort of friendly talk he has had with not a few of those prominently identified with the Federation in an executive or representative capacity.

And right here he desires to express his appreciation of the courtesy shown to him by all connected with the Federation, and to thank individually the many who favored him with their views upon the present status of this organization, in the successful operations of which we all are chiefly interested.

Of this Federation to-day can be demanded no apology for its existence, and it has only to point to the array of its annual bulletins for proof of its usefulness and conscientious industry.

That it came into being at a period so late in the life of our Commonwealth is to be regretted. For many years to the

patient and painstaking local laborer in every phase of our historical activity, the actual pre-eminence of Pennsylvania in history as a factor in nation building has been no secret, and to the thoughtful analyst of the situation is patent the reason why this great State has been such an insignificant figure in the recorded story of the nation's past.

Historiography in Pennsylvania suggests to the experienced observer a mighty mosaic, wrought in double tides by the hand of some whimsical workman with a cubist or like eccentric design upon his trestle-board, or a heroic canvas sketched by some mad artist who has dashed his brush hither and thither, ignorant or regardless of every law of arrangement and order.

In the long years of the past, while Pennsylvania with criminal complaisance has allowed her public documents, her priceless MMS, her archives, to be the prey of the selfish relic hunter and collector, or to be food for the paper mills; while she has left unnoted, unmarked and unguarded the remains of her antiquities, her countless historical sites, her landmarks, her trophies and her keepsakes, and has contentedly relegated them to the tender mercies of the tooth of time or to the greedy clutch of the mercenary purloiner; while Pennsylvania has been thus neglectful, record-keeping, record-preserving, monument and marker building have been for nearly two hundred years fixed habits in New England, and I know of no more valuable historical record made in America than the splendid documentary histories of Massachusetts and New York, treasure chests they are indeed for the student and writer of American history.

Need we then marvel or complain that the history of East America has been written largely from the standpoint of New England and New York, and that Pennsylvania has not been accorded her rightful place in it?

The trouble with us has not been and is not that we have been lacking in competent, zealous and industrious biographers, genealogists, annalists, chroniclers and local historians; not that the rich parts of the mosaic remain unchisled, not that the constituent figures and features of the heroic canvas have not been etched with skill; but because we have been so tardy in conceiving, so sluggish in executing plans of concert-

ed action and of associated work; team play they call it in modern parlance. So helpless amid the commercialism of the day; so financially poor because of the utilitarian,—it might almost be said niggardly—policy of our State, for whose honor only many of us are working, that we have no properly supported academically governed general workshop, so to speak, where may be assembled and properly distributed the *disjecta membra* of that great work, which we to-day can see only with the eye of faith; that masterpiece, the philosophical, continued and fully digested story of a great State, with which some future Keystone historian or body of such historians collaborating may enrich literature to the admiration of the world and the honor of old Pennsylvania.

For the work already accomplished by the Federation there is nothing but commendation; praiseworthy is the term applied to it, especially in the light of the fact that it has been largely “the making of bricks without straw.”

As to the form of organization; in the light of experience the Federation’s plan of working under a system of standing committees, each with specific duties, is approved as easily the most comprehensive plan for bringing results.

There has been some criticism of the manner in which these committees have been constituted. Delvers into the story of the past are as a rule specialists. It is an objection quite reasonable then to say that the individual who is interested in searching out and marking historic sites, if placed upon the Committee on Bibliography, will work with little interest or efficiency; and that the individual who gives all the time he has to spare for historical work to the searching out and preserving of MMS. record, rarely leaving home, should be placed upon the Committee on Historical Activity, which has chiefly “to do with the formation of historical societies in different parts of the State.”

These references are sufficient to show the trend of the objection.

The interest of the individual thus identified with the work of Federation in an uncongenial way will doubtless be but sentimental. This situation arises, it is suggested, from a lack of acquaintance by the president with the individual members of the Federation and of a knowledge of the individual’s

tastes and usual historical pursuits; also it is one of the arguments advanced in favor of more extended or more frequent sessions and a longer tenure of office for the president.

It would be a difficult task to choose members of the several standing committees who would have a personal rather than a sentimental interest in the work of the committee, and after all in the widening influence of ideas, it remains true that an idea rarely becomes a strong agent unless it is taken in a solvent of sentimental feeling, and it has been well said that "The great world battle for the development of thought is continuously foreshadowed in the struggle of patriotic feeling or sentiment seeking justification for life of State or country."

Additional standing committees with general duties have been suggested. Reference will be made to this phase of the subject later.

The failure of the standing committees to hold a meeting or meetings in the interim between the annual meetings for consultation, has been criticized, and it has been suggested that the standing committees be required each to have a meeting in the spring to mark out plans, and if possible a second meeting near the close of the year.

Many representatives believe that the annual sessions of the Federation are too brief and the business too hurriedly transacted. Some advocate a full day's session; others favor a full day's session and an evening session of a social character, for the purpose of improving the acquaintanceship of the members.

A plea also has been entered that the Federation once a year hold an extra session (other than its business session at Harrisburg) at, say—Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Erie, etc., in succession.

It seems desirable to some representatives that something along new channels be introduced. The Federation meets in so obscure a manner and for so short a time that even its own representatives have no opportunity for enlightenment, and it goes without saying that the public learns nothing and remains ignorant of even the fact of the existence of the Federation and the character of its work. There should be a general meeting in a public hall, some suggest, as part of the program. High school teachers and students should be present to listen

to papers or lectures on live historical subjects. If this program be not followed, then let other means be adopted toward furthering wider interest in the State's history among school teachers and educators.

It has been further suggested that the work of our association is federated activity and not individual activity; hence it follows that the meetings of the Federation cannot be and should not be the same as those of individual and local societies. They should be devoted to planning by delegates and not to pleasure, resulting from the hearing of papers read or enjoyment of any description. Those who attend are busy men, and should these meetings be prolonged to any extent, it might have the effect of deterring certain persons from giving their time and advice who could not be well spared.

As to the character of the work; the making of historical records of a continuous character is strongly advocated. It is advanced that it would be well for each local society to start at the very beginning of its local history, and by a series of exhaustive monographs thus furnish a complete whole up to the present time. This would give material for the complete history of the development of the province and the Commonwealth, and then properly collated, or even by the publication of the monographs, should be superior to anything in existence. This would be method as compared to the haphazard arrangement.

It is a question also whether it might not be well to appoint a committee whose duty it would be to give a resumé of, important happenings during the year, especially with reference to historical events, operations, and activities. This might be in the nature of a scrap book containing extracts from newspapers and other sources. Eventually this would make a valuable and interesting collection. It is further suggested that the work under the head of Publication of Lists be extended to include the preparation of a list of historical publications of the past, including provincial newspapers, etc., known to be in existence, noting the library or other place where they may be found; such collation to be made by an experienced librarian and he or she remunerated for services rendered. The work of existing committees of course to be continued in its present form.

One of the most imperative demands is for the publication of important and practical data which has been gathered by the Federation; an almost universal demand and one that looks to almost certain accomplishment is that for the preparation and publication of Pennsylvania Historical Indices; first the index of the matters collated and presented in the various bulletins published by the Federation; then for exhaustive indices of all series of Pennsylvania's published Archives, the Colonial Records, the Statutes at Large, the special laws passed by the legislature, and kindred publications. There cannot be any doubt of the far-reaching importance of the promotion and publication of such a work as this. It is amazing, the amount of interesting historical matter that is buried and inaccessible in the publications referred to.

Valuable suggestions have also been made with respect to the form of the return made of their activities, by local historical societies, to the Federation, and it is suggested that a more comprehensive system is desirable for this return; the subject being important enough for a special committee to be appointed to prepare a standard form for such returns.

One objection to the form of organization voiced is that the meetings of the Federation are participated in by too few people, and the subject matter of the meetings is usually of such a routine character that persons do not care to go to the expense to travel a great distance in order merely to attend to routine business. And the thought is thrown out that if it were possible to bring to the meetings of the Federation some of the great historians of the country and others who are capable of dealing with great historical features of our American life, and have them read a paper or deliver an address on some phase of American history, State or National, it might be beneficial and arouse more interest in the meetings of the Federation.

The unstable and non-continuing character of the representative membership is also adverted to. It is desirable that there should be more permanence in the representation, and several suggestions have been made in this regard; one particularly which is worthy of consideration, and that is that there shall be created a plan of permanent fellowship, and that each society, a member, shall have the privilege of pre-

senting the name of its most interested and effective worker to the Executive Committee of the Federation, looking to his choice as a Fellow of the Federation, to remain in continuous connection with it; the number of Fellows to be limited so that the body should not become unwieldly, and the Board of Fellows to be and remain in a sort of advisory capacity with the Executive Committee. In this connection it has also been suggested that the Federation shall ordain a medal or a decoration, to be awarded at long intervals and after mature deliberation to some local historical worker who has attained pre-eminence; particularly in the field of Pennsylvania Historical Research.

Loan deposits of historical documents and manuscripts in private hands, in the opinion of some representatives, would add value to this data and certainly render it more available. The MMS, etc., could be placed in the custody of the nearest local historical society (in the absence of a general federation or commission depository), and a return of the same be made to the Federation, scheduling the general character, date, etc., of the records, MMS, or documents, the name of the owner and the address of the secretary of the society with which it is deposited. This is undoubtedly a good thing to do, but the difficulty in the way is to satisfy the private owner of the relic or whatever it may be that it is safe in the hands of the custodian.

There comes another timely suggestion to your president, given from the viewpoint of one who has long been a member and officer of an active local historical society. It involves the promotion of more general interest in local historical societies. At present, the argument is, the contract of the Federation with the local societies as such is feeble, and with the membership of them almost null. The name of the Federation nearly passes out of mind with the lapse of time between the yearly meetings. The character of the relation between the Federation and the local historical society is appraised at a high value, and any plan that will cause the Federation to come more frequently and more directly at least into the notice of the membership of the local societies is worth considering. A plan deemed effective and up to date for this purpose is the publication of an "organ," to call it by a common name. It

should be simple in form; not ambitious; to be nothing more than a means of communication and of inter-communication between the local societies, including, and restricted to, the briefest statement of general interest; titles, etc., of papers read; perhaps notes and queries, etc., added.

Under such a plan as this a list of papers, subjects, authors, etc., might be kept continuous during the year and bound in annual volumes.

This proposition, like many other valuable ones that have already been made, is largely dependent upon the financial ability of the Federation, and here is the crux of the whole matter. It is a crying shame that an organization of this kind with its potentialities for valuable and effective work, should be hampered for a lack of funds. It should be to the first interest of the representatives in the legislature in this State, and of the governor of this State, who, if anyone, should be moved by patriotic impulse, to see to it that this unselfish work the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies is endeavoring to perform, should receive the most substantial financial assistance, and that promptly.

Lest it should be forgotten, opportunity is here taken to recommend that the Federation devise, adapt and have printed or engraved an appropriate certificate of membership commensurate with the dignity of the body, to be delivered gratis to every historical organization or association which has already become or shall become an active member.

Active representatives in the Federation quick to recognize any agency of historical activity which gives promise of proving practical and efficient in its work, have represented to your president the importance of having this body give official recognition and encouragement to the Pennsylvania State Historical Commission, appointed by the governor under legislative authority.

The duties of this commission are defined in the act of assembly creating it, approved July 25, 1913.

Upon its own initiative or upon the petition of municipalities or historical societies, the commission may mark by proper monuments, tablets, or markers, places or buildings within this Commonwealth where historical events have transpired,

and may arrange for the care and maintenance of such markers or monuments.

It may also undertake the preservation or restoration of ancient or historic public buildings, military works or monuments connected with the history of Pennsylvania.

It is also authorized to receive on behalf of the Commonwealth gifts, bequests, etc., of relics or other articles of historical interest; the same to be deposited in the care of the commission's official curator in the State Museum.

The commission is also empowered to act as trustee of gifts or bequests of money or securities bequeathed for the endowment of its work.

The personnel of the commission as at present constituted is as follows:

Hon. William C. Sproul, Chester, Pa. Chairman.

Rev. George P. Donehoo, Coudersport, Pa., Secretary.

Mr. William H. Stephenson, Pittsburgh, Pa., Treasurer.

Hon. William U. Hensel, Lancaster, Pa.

Hon. Hampton L. Carson, Philadelphia, Pa.

Hon. Thomas Lynch Montgomery, Harrisburg, Pa., Curator.

This commission, though scarcely more than a year old, has gone to work in a manner so understandingly and with the zeal naturally to be expected from the experienced gentlemen who compose it, that it has already awakened a latent interest in historical matters in many parts of the State. This augurs well for its success in the future. In the very nature of things the measure of its accomplishments up to the present time is not wide, but seeds have been sown which will unquestionably bring forth fruit.

As may be gathered from its first report to the governor, it has planned for:

1. A survey of the historic monuments erected in whole or part under State auspices, and with the aid of State appropriations, to the end that a systematic and uniform method (both as to cost of erection and style of monument or marker) may be adopted.

2. A survey of memorial markers or tablets erected by private benefactions, local societies and committees, and by individual contributions.

3. It has made a series of personal visitations, and thus by the interest shown has quickened and awakening historical activity in several important sections of the State; either upon the occasion of the dedication of private or semi-public memorials or of anniversary celebrations.

The only complete work which it has thus far accomplished has been the erection conjointly with the Enoch Brown Memorial Association of a suitable marker upon the site of the old Indian Fort McCord in Franklin County.

As to work in contemplation for the near future, steps have been taken toward the marking of Fort Hunter, near Harrisburg; Fort Ligonier at Ligonier; Fort Necessity at Mount Washington; the House or Hall of the Swedish Governor, John Printz, on Tinicum Island, near Philadelphia, and the home of James Sandilands, member of Markham's First Counsel, etc., at Chester.

As the Indian history of the State comes first chronologically considered, it should be emphasized first, so the commission recommends that the first direct legislative grant or appropriation be made for the erection of a proper monument at the scene of Bouquet's notable achievement in defeating the Indians at or near "Bushey Run" in 1763. This is a typical landmark, the commission argues, as it "Foreran the collapse of Pontiac's conspiracy and cleared the path from Carlisle to Fort Pitt."

The commission recommends in addition that the State give its support to the movement having as its object the purchase of the old powder magazine at Fort Augusta, Sunbury, as Fort Augusta was the most important fort on the Susquehanna during the Revolution, as well as during the period of Indian hostilities.

This Federation should at once recognize the utility of systematic and rational work along the line of activity in which the Pennsylvania Historical Commission is engaged; contrasting the certain results of such activity upon those who are to live after us with the woeful outcome of the culpable neglect to perform a like patriotic duty in the past.

Your president does not hesitate to emphasize in this presence to-day certain strictures which he has before frequently

given expression to, regarding the dereliction of his native State in patriotic duty.

How may we measure the serious results flowing from the prideless and unconcerned neglect of the people of Pennsylvania in not awakening from their personal indifference regarding the situation, and in not demanding with effect governmental aid to properly preserve the memorials of the State's glorious founding and her grand achievements, and to preserve for her dignity and honor among the sisterhood of states, for the instruction and inspiration of the present and coming generations of her children, the full and true story of the priceless sacrifices endured and the mighty deeds performed by her for the common good in every era of our country's history.

Painfully apparent is the neglect of Pennsylvania, evidenced not only in the emasculated, scattered and hitherto unprotected condition of her archives, but also in her almost absolute failure heretofore to mark her historic sites. As hereinbefore briefly referred to in passing, New England has preserved with jealous care every accessible minute of governmental act, or note of individual performance in the past, and has marked with enduring monuments every historic locality. These monuments which emblazon the pathway of her greatness are so plainly set that "the wayfaring man, though a fool," may read the glorious story they tell. The printed volumes of her archives and documentary history are a great memorial to the achievements of the State and of the individual citizen, and a rich mine from which the writers of general history gather information, and the New England compilers of school histories obtain the leaven of New England greatness, which they plant with impunity in every Pennsylvania school, whose scholars, under its workings, grow eloquent in composition and debate over the brave and meritorious conduct of some New England worthy of the past, while they tread in ignorance every day, it may be, over the unmarked and forgotten graves of most of the Pennsylvania-born soldiers, high in rank and service in the Indian, Revolutionary, and late wars, and of heroes easily the first in civil life in the story of our country's past.

This lovely land of ours is rich in historic sites. Marked and identified with enduring monuments intelligently setting forth the carefully garnered truth, they may become eloquent object lessons, to inspire with patriotic ardor and to teach, with a note of warning, the youth of to-day and to-morrow something of the golden story of the singleness of purpose, the self-sacrificing spirit, of the true love of country, of men and women in Pennsylvania in the days when the nation was building; as contrasted with the brazen spirit of the commercialism of to-day, to which a benighted people in their complacency would fain accord stately monuments.

In the lapse of time there comes a passing under the inexorable law of nature, first of human witnesses; then of written records, and lastly of traditions, and if men have not been wise in their day and generation, the past is lost and without a knowledge of the past how may we rightly and intelligently live in the present, or forecast the future?

Let us not only encourage with our commendation the work of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, but also let us endorse its proposed plan of operation, pledging our aid and co-operation in every possible way.

To this end it is recommended:

1. That the Pennsylvania Historical Commission be invited to become an active member of this Federation.

2. That an additional standing committee of the Federation be created, to be called "The Committee on the Location and Marking of Historic Sites and of Correspondence with the Pennsylvania Historical Commission."

3. That the present members of the commission and their successors in office shall be ex-officio, the members of the new standing committee to be ordained, and that they shall have the power to nominate to the president of the Federation additional members of the proposed committee not exceeding five in number, to be chosen from the constituent members of the Federation, in such manner and for such terms of service as the ex-officio members of the committee may deem advisable.

Trusting that it will not be too much of an imposition upon the patience and time of the representatives in the Federation, your president ventures to extend his remarks at this time just a little further. What he may say may be adjudged

as of a lighter vein; it involves a statement of some facts relating to the origin and fate of certain of Pennsylvania's relics, trophies and keepsakes. These facts are a partial survey along this line, casting a side light upon our Commonwealth's peculiar kind of neglect such as we have been complaining of, and possibly proving to some extent of an informing character. These facts are partially drawn from the scrap book of memory covering forty odd years, aided to no small degree by a fixed habit in the narrator of "takin' notes" at odd times and in odd places.

WHEREAS, The wisest, freest, and bravest nations in the most virtuous times have endeavored to perpetuate the memory of those who have rendered their country distinguished service, by preserving their resemblances in statues and paintings, this council, deeply sensible how much the liberty, safety and happiness of America in general and Pennsylvania in particular is owing to His Excellency, General George Washington and the brave men under his command, do resolve that His Excellency, General George Washington, be requested to permit this council to place his portrait in the council chamber, not only as a mark of the great respect which they bear to His Excellency, but that the contemplation of it may excite others to tread in the same glorious and disinterested steps which led to public happiness and private honor; and the president be desired to wait upon His Excellency, the General, with the above request, and if granted, to inquire when and where it will be most agreeable to him for Mr. Peale to attend him.

I Col. Rec. vol. XI, pg. 671,
Jan. 18, 1779.

These were the sentiments cordially expressed by the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania on the 18th of January, 1779, following an earlier offer made to the president by Capt. Charles Wilson Peale, the "Patriot Artist" of the Revolution, to paint, as a gift to the council the portrait of Gen. George Washington.

What a message of encouragement the above quoted words bring to us to-day!

General Washington courteously permitted the artist to do this work. The portrait was received and accorded great honor, being hung in a conspicuous place in the council chamber. As far as is known, it was the first memorial painting taken into possession by the province and State (barring of course pictures, arms and statues of the kings of England).

On the 12th of June, 1780, Peale, the zealous patriot, again addressed Joseph Reed, president of the Supreme Executive Council, in these words:

“SIRS: Ever fond of perpetuating the remembrance of the worthies of my time, as I can see it would be a means of exciting an emulation in our posterity to deserve the like attention, and mankind will receive an advantage thereby; the likeness being added to the historic page, giving it more force and the reader more pleasure; with this view I wish to transmit to after ages the likeness of our worthy president, the Hon. Thomas Wharton, Esq., and for that purpose would beg Your Excellency and the Honorable the Executive Council to give the portrait of that good man which I herewith send a place in the council chamber.”

1 Pa. Archives, Vol. 10, page 163.

Upon the same day this courteous offer of Peale was accepted by President Reed on behalf of the council in these words:

“SIR: The council returns you their thanks for the obliging mark of your attention this morning, by presenting the portrait of the late worthy President Wharton. A character so amiable and distinguished in the great contest cannot be too much honored or his remembrance too well deserved. It will therefore be placed near the portrait of our Excellent General with whom in his station he so nobly and faithfully co-operated.”

1 Pa. Arch., Vol. 8, page 319.

This was the second memorial portrait received by the government; the first to hang by the side of Washington.

On the 14th of May, 1790, the executors of the will of Dr. Benjamin Franklin addressed the Supreme Executive Council,

presenting an extract from the will of the deceased doctor in these words:

“My picture, drawn by Martin in 1767, I give to the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, if they shall be pleased to do me the honor of accepting it and placing it in their chamber.”

In the reply of President Thomas Mifflin to Francis Hopkinson and others, executors of Dr. Franklin, accepting the portrait, he says:

“The services rendered by that illustrious citizen to his country during a long and active life have raised a monument of gratitude and affection to his memory which cannot be improved by art nor destroyed by time. But the present instance of his regard is peculiarly pleasing to a body of which all the members have been informed by his wisdom and many honored by his friendship.

“We cannot therefore hesitate in declaring our cordial acceptance of the legacy, which being placed in the council chamber may become a public benefit and lead from contemplating the picture to an imitation of the patriot.”

1 Pa. Arch., Vol. XI, pg. 701.

Is it to be believed that any one here knows the present whereabouts and the custody of these old historic portraits? If they are any where, carefully guarded, with the story of their origin traced upon their reverse sides, please tell the speaker about it; he does not know.

The scrap book of memory and the material notes in aid of memory earlier referred to began at a period dating back fully forty-five years, when the old capitol of Pennsylvania was, so to speak, in its prime, after fifty years of existence. Then every nook and corner in the quaint array of buildings, every public hall, chamber, and office, including the old library, were cherished haunts of one who loved the traditions, the relics, the objects of historical interest, the keepsakes, and the precious volumes which contained in “hotchpot” the fascinating story of the Commonwealth’s past.

There was the old Senate Chamber, itself a curiosity; adorned with certain historic paintings. The unique old por-

traits of Christopher Columbus and Americus Vespuccius; life size heads, the work of a once popular master painter of Florence, from whom they were purchased by Commodore Jesse Elliot and by him presented to the Commonwealth.

In the ante rooms of the Senate were two full length oil paintings, if I remember their size correctly, one of William Penn and one of General Washington. They were painted and placed in the Senate chamber by authority of a resolution of the Senate about the year 1827. .

On the massive stone mantelpiece to the right of the Senate chamber was a unique object; a statuette, so to speak, of an eagle *rouyant*. This was also the gift of Commodore Elliot to the State, and was carved by a common sailor on board of one of the commodore's ships, out of a bit of marble pillar from the ruins of Alexandria, Egypt. Does anybody know the whereabouts of these objects of historical interest?

Three oil paintings of considerable size, heavily framed with wood taken from "Old Ironsides," the frigate "Constitution," representing scenes in the naval battle on Lake Erie, 1814, also presented to the State by Commodore Elliot, for a period of time adorned the rotunda of the capitol, until they were relegated to the junk heap of the attic and there mingled their ashes with that of other relics in the shape of miscellaneous State documents and archives, antique furniture, etc., in the holocaust of the stately old building.

In the reception room of the old executive chamber, from the walls of which once looked down the portraits of the governors of Pennsylvania from the beginning down to the period spoken of, were once many objects of historical interest. Suspended in frames were the certificates of the election of the first president and vice presidents of the colonial assembly; each signed by all the members who participated in the election.

Here also was a case in which were preserved many relics. Here was the first flag of the province, purchased by the provincial assembly, September 1, 1738, at a cost of 23 pounds, 17 shillings and 3 pence. Also a flag taken from the Hessians at the Battle of Trenton, even then moth eaten and much faded. A package of torn letters, yellowed by time, being fragments of a correspondence between Alexander Hamilton and Franklin.

There were also letters from Washington and Robert Hunter Morris; also a gratifying number of ancient title deeds signed by the Indians with their own peculiar signatures. These particularly attracted the attention of Charles Dickens when he visited the capitol, as he mentions them in his *American Notes*. Quantities of early State paper money are also recollected as being deposited there.

Particular objects of curiosity in the cabinet were three of the massive silver medals that were struck by authority of the legislature for presentation to the Pennsylvania volunteers who participated in the Battle of Lake Erie, which had never been delivered. They were two inches in diameter, one-eighth of an inch thick, and contained four dollars worth of silver. On the obverse of the medal was a bust of Commodore Perry, with this inscription: "Oliver Hazard Perry, Pro Patria. Presented by the Government of Pennsylvania." The reverse side bore the legend: "We have met the enemy and they are ours," and within a wreath is engraved the name of the donee, followed by these words: "In testimony of his patriotism and bravery in the naval action on Lake Erie, Sept. 10, 1813." The names of the soldiers rewarded were Isaac B. Sill, Jacob Levansetleg, and John Cook. There was another medal of bronze in this collection which was of particular interest to the narrator because it awoke in him at times, but futilely, the spirit of research. This medal was presented to the State by Louis Philippe (Duke of Orleans), King of France from the Revolution of July, 1830, to that of 1848, and founder of the Kingdom of Belgium. It was presented in commemoration of the system of international exchanges of literary objects established some years before between the French government and Pennsylvania through the agency of Monsieur Valemoré. The feeling of Louis was friendly. He had lived from 1796 to 1800 in the United States, during the period when he was a refugee. He was a man of fair gifts and certain commendable achievements, much interested in literary matters. Marceline des Borddes (Valemoré), (1818 to 1839), who began her career as an operatic singer, but who after her marriage to the tragedian Valemoré abandoned the stage and devoted her time to literature, was during the reign of Louis Philippe a favorite

of his, and did much toward interesting him in his patronage of literature. Some of her works were translated into English by Harriet W. Prescott in 1872. It is to be regretted that exact information on this subject is not now obtainable.

A chief object of interest in the old cabinet in the executive chamber was the original first Constitution of Pennsylvania, 1790. Twenty-five years ago, upon the preparation of an article upon the one hundredth anniversary of the adoption of this constitution, the speaker had a photograph made of the first and last pages of this document, the last page containing the original signatures. Here it is, the best he can do. (Photograph of first State Constitution exhibited.) He shows it with the hope that the original paper is somewhere now safe in the hands of the State. He wishes that the hope were not futile that the original charter of William Penn for his province were in like safe hands. What the State possesses of that important document is a beautifully illuminated certified copy, which for long years hung upon the walls of the executive chamber, framed from the wood said to be taken from the triumphal arch which was erected in Philadelphia at the time of the celebration of the definitive treaty of peace in 1783. If we might believe (which by the way was not a general happening with those who knew his penchant for romancing), the story told by one Benjamin F. Burroughs, of blessed memory, the frame of this charter was veneered with wood taken from the cherry tree which the infant but precocious George Washington is said to have once so sadly mutilated with his little hatchet.

In the old library room, which was opened January 12, 1822, were many objects of interest; two particular publications among the volumes which are borne in mind to-day were, first, the History and Biography of the Indian Tribes of North America, with portraits copied from the Indian gallery in the War Department at Washington, D. C., by Charles D. King, under authority of the government; a most valuable work, purchased by the State at great cost. The other a magnificent copy of Boydell's "Shakespeare," very few of which were to be found in this country, and which also was purchased by the State for a very considerable sum of money.

If these valuable works were delivered to the custody of our present amiable and genial State Librarian, I feel sure they are still preserved in safety with the care which they deserve.

The central adornment of the library room was a full length terra cotta statue in heroic shape of the Goddess Minerva, surmounting an hexagonal desk. This object of art was purchased in Rome, Italy, especially for the library. From projections extending from the capitals of the pillars supporting the gallery looked down a series of life-sized busts of plaster or terra cotta representing, with the exception of one, mythological and classical personages; the remaining bust was that of the late Chief Justice Gibson.

To the visitor entering, these busts appeared in the following order, beginning upon the right hand: First, Demosthenes; second, Chief Justice Gibson; third, a Dacian gladiator; fourth, Jupiter Tonans; fifth, Minerva; sixth, Venus; seventh, Bacchus; eighth, the Infant Hercules; ninth, Mars. These were a gift to the State by the Philadelphia School of Design.

The fate of the busts in the library was so tragic that the story is thought to be of sufficient interest to be told here. About sixteen or seventeen years ago a sale of old junk gathered in and about the capitol was advertised. In looking over the collection your speaker first noted among the flotsam and jetsam the broken and mutilated statue of Minerva, ruined beyond repair. Back of where she lay in her ruined glory, were lined up the other busts that had once adorned the library, and here and there were other articles, old relics of the Commonwealth which many an observer was surprised to see thus cast upon the junk heap. The sale took place, however, and the busts were put up at auction. The auctioneer hailed the appearance of John Bannister Gibson with this remark: "Who wants this old guy? We will call him Lincoln 'cause 'taint his name. He goes, curly head and all!" Then followed the bust of Jupiter Tonans, and "Here is old Aguinaldo; who wants him? Sold to the same party." Then followed in the wake the bust of Venus. "Here she is, Aguinaldo's sister—who wants her?" And so it went to the close of the list, which were all sold to the same purchaser. The bust of John Bannister Gibson now adorns a dusty shelf in a law office with

which your speaker is well acquainted, and the washing of his face, the combing of his hair and the re-outlining of his nasal extremity with "Wriggley's best" are biennial functions in that legal den.

The most interesting article offered at this remarkable junk sale of the Commonwealth was a tall and stately chair, characterized by the auctioneer as "An old lounge." This was offered with the guarantee that the "buzzard" which adorned its back went with it. And in that shape it was sold to the gentleman who "called the turn" for the petty bid. Even now my hair stands on end with the mere recollection of such irreverence. That "old lounge" was the first speaker's chair of the Senate of Pennsylvania. Its tall back surmounted with a massive carving of Pennsylvania's coat of arms; the carving surmounted with a gilded eagle, rousant, which is the crest of the ensign; the "buzzard" of the auctioneer. It stands in the library of your speaker to-day, and whilst its portly and old-fashioned upholstery does not invite one to frequently sit in it, yet sitting elsewhere and contemplating it, there arise visions of the past. We may see sitting in that chair, at the invitation of Mr. Marks, speaker of the Senate, the noble Marquis de Lafayette, on the occasion of his visit here in 1825. When upon the same visit he sat in the then speaker's chair of the House of Representatives at the invitation of old General Sutherland, the speaker, who with pride called the attention of the Marquis to the fact that the speaker's chair was the old John Hancock chair, which fact inspired the visitor to say: "The sight of the presidential chair of my venerable friend John Hancock, excites patriotic recollections connected with the thought that from this chair also he signed my early admission as a soldier in the American Army." Another vision which the chair provokes is that of the visit of Dickens in 1845, and that of the Prince of Wales, afterward King Edward, in 1860.

The patriotic ardor of the Centennial year took the Hancock chair to Philadelphia, but the lack of patriotic feeling cast the first speaker's chair of the Senate into the junk heap.

It would be impossible to refer to all of the State's trophies and relics and to their fate, but one other reference must be made to those beautiful trophies which were presented to the

Continental Congress by the Marquis de Lafayette. What is referred to is the three beautiful brass cannon, six pounders, which were brought to this country in the fleet of the Count d'Estang. For many long years they were mounted in front of the old arsenal; subsequently in front of the Mexican Monument. Where they are now may be known to some. These cannon closely resembled each other in general appearance, differing only in the mottoes adorning them. The breeches were carved to represent two dolphins, rampant. Upon the upper surface at the middle was a plate upon which the figures of a sun, crown, cannon, and flag were closely combined, crowned by the words: "*nec pluribus impar, 1756.*" In company with these relics of the Revolution were also mounted there two other brass cannon, the one a six and the other an eighteen pounder, which were captured during the Mexican War at Cerro Gordo by the American army. The one, cast in Mexico, has upon its breech the inscription "*El Paso,*" and engraved near its muzzle the words, "*Captured at Cerro Gordo, 1847, by the American army under Major General Scott, presented to the State of Pennsylvania by Major General Patterson.*" The other gun was manufactured at Liverpool, England.

One other important relic we almost forgot to mention: On the fifteenth of October, 1768, the American Philosophical Society addressed the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly, then in session at Philadelphia, requesting them to purchase a reflecting telescope, with a micrometer, for the purpose of making observations on the transit of Venus over the sun's disk, which was to take place the following June, representing the great importance of such observations to the interests of astronomy and navigation, and consequently, to trade and commerce; and stating, moreover, that there was not a telescope in the province, and possibly on the continent, proper for this purpose. On the same day (Oct. 15, 1768; see V. of A., Vol. VI, page 111) the assembly voted to appropriate one hundred pounds sterling for the purchase of such a telescope and micrometer for the purposes mentioned in the address, and for future use. The speaker was directed to write to Benjamin Franklin, Esq., who was then in London, requesting him to purchase and forward the instruments. As indicated, they were used at Philadelphia in the observations made on the occasion

of the transit of Venus, a full account of which is published in the first volume of the transactions of the Philosophical Society. The telescope was afterwards used by the commissioners appointed to survey the boundary lines between Pennsylvania and the states of Maryland, Virginia and New York. It was a Gregorian reflector, two feet focal length, with a Dollond micrometer.

For long years this relic was preserved in the State Library, an object of great interest to all who knew its history, but just prior to the destruction of the main capitol building, for some unexplained reason, it was carelessly taken from its position in the new library building back to the basement of the main building, where it was wholly destroyed by fire, February 2, 1897. Such is the story of its fate, and it is possibly true, yet there would be stronger warrant for unquestioning belief in that story if it were not for the hard fact that has convinced so many of us long ago, that to a considerable class of people the commercial value of an object makes a much stronger appeal than its value as an historical relic. This old telescope in its entirety was fashioned of brass, and no extraordinary care was ever exercised in its safe keeping. This is only another instance of the utter carelessness manifested by the State of Pennsylvania in the preservation of her archives and relics.

Just a brief mention of one other matter. Right over the entrance to the library was a picture which also attracted the attention of Charles Dickens as a visitor. It is a representation of an attempt of the Indians to burn at the stake John Harris, the first settler at Harrisburg. It was painted by Reeder from a scenario furnished by Robert Harris, the grandson of the settler.

Now might it not be worth while to learn something concerning the whereabouts of most of these old relics?

Not all of the above information respecting the relics, &c., which were once contained in the old capitol buildings is claimed to be dependent for its accuracy alone upon the personal recollections of the author of this address, but he is glad of this opportunity to pay a brief tribute to the memory of one who was a most indefatigable worker in local history, and to whose work full credit has never been given. In the early

days this gentleman was a fellow newspaper reporter and legislative correspondent with the compiler of the above paper, and in company with him visited almost every nook and cranny of the old capitol and studied its objects of interest. To one equally interested with himself he was generous in sharing his information, his memoranda and notes. By no means all of the information gathered by him has been edited and published. Much was scattered around in the hands of friends and now one of those friends desires to make grateful acknowledgment to the memory of George H. Morgan for valuable historical matter furnished in the long ago.

Fellow Workers: I thank you for your patient hearing. It is not for us to be discouraged because our laboring day "distrustful twilight sheds, and still holds in dim eclipse our duty." That duty stands revealed in shining light "that doth not mislead the moon," and unashamed for what is past, will we not follow where it leads?

